National Aeronautics and Space Administration

INFORMATION SHEET

Number 78-1

Prepared by:

LFF-3/Public Services Branch
Office of External Relations
NASA Headquarters
Washington, DC 20546

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

The information contained here has been compiled to respond to queries on Unidentified Flying Objects directed to the White House as well as NASA.

NASA is the focal point for answering public inquiries to the White House relating to UFOs. NASA is not engaged in a research program involving these phenomena, nor is any other government agency.

BACKGROUND

In July of 1977, Dr. Frank Press, Director of Science and Technology Policy, Executive Office of the President, wrote to Dr. Robert A. Frosch, the NASA Administrator, suggesting NASA should answer all UFO-related mail and also to consider whether NASA should conduct an active research program on UFOs. In a letter dated December 21, 1977, Dr. Frosch agreed that NASA will continue to respond to UFO-related mail as it has in the past and, if a new element of hard evidence that UFOs exist is brought to NASA's attention from a credible source, NASA will analyze the unexplained organic or inorganic sample and report its findings.

Quoting from Dr. Frosch's December 21 letter: "...If some new element of hard evidence is brought to our attention in the future, it would be entirely appropriate for a NASA laboratory to analyze and report upon an otherwise unexplained organic or inorganic sample; we stand ready to respond to any bona fide physical evidence from credible sources. We intend to leave the door clearly open for such a possibility.

"We have given considerable thought to the question of what else the United States might and should do in the area of UFO research. There is an absence of tangible or physical evidence available for thorough laboratory analysis. And, because of the absence of such evidence, we have not been able to devise a sound scientific procedure for investigating these phenomena. To proceed on a research task without a sound disciplinary framework and an exploratory technique in mind would be wasteful and probably unproductive.

"I do not feel that we could mount a research effort without a better starting point than we have been able to identify thus far. I would therefore propose that NASA take no steps to establish research in this area or to convene a symposium on this subject.

"I wish in no way to indicate that NASA has come to any conclusion about these phenomena as such; institutionally, we retain an open mind, a keen sense of scientific curiosity and a willingness to analyze technical problems within our competence."

Reports of unidentified objects entering United States air space are of interest to the military as a regular part of defense surveillance. Beyond that, the U.S. Air Force no longer investigates reports of UFO sightings.

This was not always the case. On December 17, 1969, the Secretary of the Air Force announced the termination of Project Blue Book, the Air Force program for UFO investigation started in 1947.

The decision to discontinue UFO investigations, the USAF said, was based on: (1) an evaluation of a report (often called the Condon Report) prepared by the University of Colorado and entitled "Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects;" (2) a review of the University of Colorado report by the National Academy of Sciences; (3) past UFO studies; and (4) Air Force experience investigating UFO reports for two decades.

As a result of these investigations and studies, and experience gained from investigating UFO reports since 1948, the conclusions of the Air Force were: (1) no UFO reported, investigated, and evaluated by the Air Force has ever given any indication of threat to our national security; (2) there has been no evidence submitted to or discovered by the Air Force that sightings categorized as "unidentified" represent technological developments or principles beyond the range of present day scientific knowledge; and (3) there has been no evidence indicating that sightings categorized as "unidentified" are extraterrestrial vehicles.

With the termination of Project Blue Book, the Air Force regulation establishing and controlling the program for investigating and analyzing UFOs was rescinded. All documentation regarding the former Blue Book investigation has been permanently transferred to the Modern Military Branch, National Archives and Records Service, 8th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20408, and is available for public review and analysis. Those wishing to review this material may obtain a researcher's permit from the National Archives and Record Service.

Also available:

Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects. Condon Report study conducted by the University of Colorado under contract F44620-76-C-0035. Three volumes, 1,465p. 68 plates. Photoduplicated hard copies of the official report may be ordered for $6 per volume, $18 the set of three, as AD 680:975, AD 680:976, and AD 680:977, from the National Technical Information Service, U.S. Department of Commerce, Springfield, VA 22151.

Review of University of Colorado Report on Unidentified Flying Objects. Review of report by a panel of the National Academy of Sciences. National Academy of Sciences, 1969, 6p. Photoduplicated hard copies may be ordered for $3 as AD 688:541 from the National Technical Information Service, U.S. Department of Commerce, Springfield, VA 22151.

NASA is aware of the many UFO reports made in recent years. However, the majority of inquiries to NASA concerning UFO sightings address themselves to the reported sightings by astronauts during Earth orbital and lunar missions and the report by President Carter while serving as Governor of Georgia.

During several space missions NASA astronauts reported phenomena not immediately explainable. However, in every instance NASA satisfied itself that what had been observed was nothing which could be termed abnormal in the space environment. The air-to-ground tapes of all manned missions are available at the Johnson Space Center, Houston, for review by the serious researcher.

On October 12, 1973, while serving as Governor of Georgia, Mr. Carter responded to inquiries from the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) saying that he had seen a bright, moving object in the sky over Leary, Georgia, in October of 1969. He said the object was visible for 10 to 12 minutes and, at one point, shone as brightly as the Moon. The regional NICAP representative investigated the sighting and reported there was no evidence to support anything beyond placing what Mr. Carter saw in NICAP's "unidentified" category. However, it has been suggested by some students of aerial phenomena that Mr. Carter may have viewed the Planet Venus which, at certain times, may appear many times brighter than a star of the first-magnitude.

Since NASA is not engaged in day-to-day UFO research, it does not review UFO-related articles intended for publication, evaluate UFO-type spacecraft drawings or accept accounts of UFO sightings or applications for employment in the field of aerial phenomena investigation. All such material will be returned with NASA's thanks to the sender.

A number of universities and scientific organizations have considered UFO phenomena during periodic meetings and seminars. In addition, a number of private domestic and foreign groups continue to review UFO sighting reports actively. Some of these organizations are:

(1) National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena
John L. Acuff, Director
Suite 23
3535 University Boulevard, West
Kensington, MD 20795
(301) 949-1267

(2) The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal
UFO Subcommittee
Robert Sheaffer, Chairman
9805 McMillan Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 589-8371

(3) Aerial Phenomena Research Organization
James and Coral Lorenzen, Directors
3910 E. Kleindale Road
Tucson, AZ 85712
(602) 793-1825

(4) Mutual UFO Network
Walter H. Andrus, Jr., Director
103 Old Towne Road
Seguin, TX 78155
(512) 379-9216

(5) The Center for UFO Studies
Dr. J. Allen Hynek, Director
924 Chicago Avenue
Evanston, IL 60202
(312) 491-1780

February 1, 1978

U S GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 1978—261 371 36